

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for dynamically grouping clients in a
2 system, comprising:

3 storing data indicative of membership in a first
4 group at a client;

5 transmitting a group membership file including
6 information indicative of client memberships in two or more
7 groups at a system host; and

8 updating the data indicative of membership in the
9 first group at the client in response to receiving the
10 group membership file.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the data
2 indicative of membership in the first group comprises a
3 first group identifier.

1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

2 creating the first group including two or more
3 member clients, a member client having a client identifier;

4 assigning the first group identifier to the first
5 group; and

6 associating the client identifiers of the member
7 clients with the first group identifier in the group
8 membership file.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the each member
2 client satisfies a criterion.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the criterion
2 comprises client profile information.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 transmitting a message including a payload and a
3 second group identifier;
4 receiving the message at the client; and
5 extracting the payload from the message in
6 response to the first client identifier matching the second
7 client identifier.

1 7. An article comprising:
2 a machine-readable medium which stores machine-
3 executable instructions, the instructions causing a machine
4 to:
5 store data indicative of membership in a first
6 group at a client;
7 transmit a group membership file including
8 information indicative of client memberships in two or more
9 groups at a system host; and

10 update the data indicative of membership in the
11 first group at the client in response to receiving the
12 group membership file.

1 8. The article of claim 7, wherein the data
2 indicative of membership in the first group comprises a
3 first group identifier.

1 9. The article of claim 8, further comprising
2 instructions causing the machine to:

3 create the first group including two or more
4 member clients, a member client having a client identifier;

5 assign the first group identifier to the first
6 group; and

7 associate the client identifiers of the member
8 clients with the first group identifier in the group
9 membership file.

1 10. The article of claim 9, wherein the criterion
2 comprises client profile information.

1 11. The article of claim 10, wherein the criterion
2 comprises client profile information.

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1 12. The article of claim 7, further comprising
2 instructions causing the machine to:
3 transmit a message including a payload and a
4 second group identifier;
5 receive the message at the client; and
6 extract the payload from the message in response
7 to the first client identifier matching the second client
8 identifier.

1 13. An apparatus comprising:
2 a memory operative to store an apparatus
3 identifier;
4 a receiver operative to receive a group
5 membership file in a first transmission, said file
6 including a group identifier and two or more associated
7 member identifiers; and
8 a receiver controller operative to store the
9 group identifier in the memory in response to said
10 apparatus identifier matching one of said member
11 identifiers.

1 14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the group
2 membership file comprises two or more group identifiers, a
3 group identifier associated with two or more member
4 identifiers.

1 15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the receiver
2 controller is operative to identify each group identifier
3 associated with a member identifier that matches the
4 apparatus identifier, and to update the memory to include
5 such identified group identifiers.

1 16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said updating
2 comprises removing a stored group identifier in response to
3 said group identifier not being associated with the
4 apparatus identifier in the group membership file.

1 17. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the receiver
2 is operative to receive a message including an identifier
3 and a payload portion, and

4 wherein the receiver controller is operative to
5 compare said identifier to the apparatus identifier and the
6 stored group identifier and discard said message in
7 response to said identifier not matching one of said
8 apparatus identifier and said group identifier.

1 18. A system host comprising:
2 a memory for storing a group membership file
3 including two or more group identifiers, a group identifier
4 associated with two or more member identifiers;

5 a group generator operative to create a first
6 group including two or more first group member identifiers
7 that share a first criterion and associate a group
8 identifier with the two or more first group membership
9 identifiers in the group membership file; and

10 a transmitter operative to transmit the group
11 member file to a plurality of client devices, two or more
12 of said client devices having client identifiers that match
13 the first group member identifiers.

1 19. The system host of claim 18, further comprising:

2 a transmission controller operative to transmit
3 the group membership file to said plurality of client
4 devices at scheduled intervals.

1 20. The system host of claim 19, wherein the group
2 generator is operative to update the group membership file
3 and transmit the updated group membership file to the
4 plurality of client devices.

1 21. A system comprising:

2 a system host comprising:

3 a memory for storing a group membership file
4 including two or more group identifiers, each

5 group identifier associated with two or more
6 member identifiers;

7 a group generator operative to create a
8 first group including two or more first group
9 member identifiers that share a first criterion
10 and associate a first group identifier with the
11 two or more first group membership identifiers in
12 the group membership file; and

13 a transmitter operative to transmit the
14 group member file; and

15 a plurality of clients, a client comprising:

16 a memory operative to store an apparatus
17 identifier;

18 a receiver operative to receive the group
19 membership file in a first transmission; and

20 a receiver controller operative to store a
21 group identifier in the memory in response to
22 said apparatus identifier matching one of said
23 member identifiers.

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2 22. The system of claim 21, wherein said
3 communication link comprises a transmission line.

1 23. The system of claim 21, wherein said
2 communication link comprises a wireless communication link.

1 24. The system of claim 21, wherein said client
2 devices comprise set-top appliances adapted for connection
3 to a television.

1 25. The system of claim 21, wherein said client devices
2 comprise hand-held wireless communication devices.